

THE PRESENT BALKAN CRISIS—A NEW EASTERN QUESTION

Why the Former Pawns
of Europe's Monarchs
Now Hold the
Whiphand.

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To the neutral observer the poetic justice of the present Balkan situation is unmistakable. For generations Europe has played with the Balkan States; they have been the pawns to be moved hither and thither as it pleased London, Petrograd, Berlin or Vienna. The ambitions of the races that inhabit this blood soaked corner of Europe, their longings, aspirations, dreams have been ignored. Condemned to live under the Turk, to endure endless agonies because the policies of great powers crossed in their territories, not only have all these states suddenly become masters of their own destinies, but all Europe is facing Armageddon because of one of them, and Czars, Emperors and Kings are bidding for the favors of those that still remain neutral.

To get an insight into the present tangle, which is the Balkan crisis, it is necessary to review hastily the more important events in the history of Europe which concern the people of the southeast, to note the conflicting claims and purposes of the great powers concerned, and finally, the even more antagonistic purposes of the little states themselves.

FROM 1903 TO 1913.

In Balkan history 1903 is a date of real importance, because it marks the assassination of the King of Serbia. At the moment the world saw in this crime only an act of unspeakable barbarity. The unfortunate Alexander became something of a royal martyr in the eyes of a world which knew next to nothing of the facts that lay south of the Danube.

Yet the crime had two great consequences. It was the beginning of the regeneration of Serbia, it was the end of Austrian domination in the little Slav state. Alexander had been the tool of Vienna. He had been but the creature that Ballplatz moved back and forth to meet the Bulgarian pawn, similarly operated by Russia. With the return of a Karageorgievitch to the Serbian throne, the Slav state changed sides and became a soldier of the Czar. Henceforth Austria had to face a foe on the south.

The immediate consequence was a long series of trade wars, the famous "pig wars" of other years, so named because Austria closed her frontiers to Serbian pigs and well nigh ruined the little agricultural state, which derived its chief income from its pork products.

While this petty quarrelling was going forward the Young Turkish Revolution broke out. Turkey, the ally of Vienna and Berlin, the master of Macedonia, was suddenly torn by an internal revolution which sent Abdul Hamid into exile and prison, destroyed the Turkish army, left Turkey weak and helpless. But in its conception the Young Turkish idea aimed at restoring Turkish power. While this idea still seemed realizable Austria, having occupied Bosnia since the Congress of Berlin, and now fearing the revitalized Turkish nation would seek to reclaim it, solemnly annexed Bosnia, thus tearing up the great Berlin document.

THE ANNEXATION OF BOSNIA.

But the annexation of Bosnia destroyed all the hopes of that greater Serbia which all Serbs had cherished for centuries. It placed definitely under Hapsburg rule the 2,000,000 Serbs living east of the Adriatic and west of the Serbian Kingdom.

Russia, France and Great Britain protested this act. There was a moment in 1908 when it seemed likely that Armageddon would come, but Germany appeared in "shining armor," rattled the sabre and the Triple Entente gave up their protest. Austrian success in the Balkans seemed assured, the eventual advance of Austria through Serbia to Salonica appeared inevitable.

But two powers now entered definitely into an anti-Austrian campaign. Italy, seeking a balance for Austrian gains, promptly picked her quarrel with Turkey over Tripoli and went to war. Russia, defeated in the field, began to construct that Balkan confederacy which was to precipitate the Balkan wars.

Italian attack upon Turkey, still in the throes of a reorganization, disclosed the weakness of the Ottoman. No sooner had the Peace of Lausanne ended the Tripolitan war than Russian diplomacy achieved the welding together of the three Slav states of the south, Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro, and the first Balkan war followed. Greece was not a party to this alliance, but Venizelos, perceiving the propi-



THE CONFLICT OF INTERESTS IN THE BALKANS.

ous hour, sent the Greek army against the Turk.

Austria, Germany, the whole statesmanship of the Central Powers looked uneasily upon the opening conflict, but were too satisfied in the strength of the German trained Turkish army to interfere. Their mistake was patent to the world, when Lule Burgas, Kumanovo and Salonica had brought swift destruction to the Osmanli.

AUSTRIA INTERVENES.

When in 1912 the conquerors of the Turk went to London to make terms of peace it was promptly disclosed that Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro had gone to war with a definite bargain. The Serb states of the south, Serbia, Bulgaria and the Skumbi River and a thin paring of Macedonia, marked by a line from the Serbo-Bulgarian frontier to Lake Ochrida. The rest of Macedonia was left to Bulgaria. Even a part of the Serbian province of Uskub was made conditional on the decision of the Czar. As for Greece, she had not made any antebellum agreement and her claim rested only on conquest.

Austrian diplomacy now seized upon the rivalries of the Balkan States to destroy this Balkan confederacy which Russia had constructed. First of all Vienna declared that Albania could not be annexed by Serbia and Greece, but must be made a separate state. This deprived Serbia of most of her prospective gain under her treaty with Bulgaria. Russia protested, but Germany again signified her readiness to go to war to support Austrian claims, and neither France nor Great Britain was willing to back Russia in a general conflict over a few square miles of Albanian wilderness.

Serbia was thus compelled to give over Albania, the Montenegrins to abandon Scutari. But Serbia had conquered all of that portion of Macedonia ascribed to Bulgaria in the preliminary treaty and now demanded that as compensation for her sacrifices in Albania she receive her conquests. Greece, too, having beaten Bulgaria to Salonica by a short head, claimed this great city, the real prize of the Balkans, aside from Constantinople. The result was as Austria had expected. The Balkan League fell apart, Serbia and

Greece joined hands against Bulgaria and the Second Balkan War resulted.

This war was precipitated by Bulgaria, confident of victory and driven forward by Austrian urgings. In vain the Czar sought by personal dispatches addressed to Bulgarian Ministers and to the Bulgarian Czar, himself, to prevent the strife. For answer the Bulgarian armies in Macedonia suddenly, treacherously attacked their Greek and Serbian allies without a declaration of war. But once more Austrian calculations went astray. The attack failed. The Greek and Serbian armies were victorious and the Bulgarian forces were driven out of Macedonia.

Meantime a new factor demanded attention. Rumania, with a Hohenzollern king had always been reckoned an Austro-German ally. By taking Bessarabia in the Russo-Turkish war and thus despoiling an ally, Russia had made a permanent enemy of Rumania. But Rumania saw in the new and greater Bulgaria a dangerous rival. Bulgarians were already declaring that they would take from Rumania the Dobrudja province, gained in the Russo-Turkish war and the sole Rumanian window on the sea. To Rumanian demands for the cession by Bulgaria of the fortress of Silistria, the real key to Rumania's coast province, Austria, busy flattering Bulgaria, turned a deaf ear.

But Russia, now thoroughly enraged at Bulgaria's course, gave full consent to Rumania to attack Bulgaria, and at the moment when the Greek and Serbian armies were winning in Macedonia a Rumanian army crossed the Danube and entered Bulgaria. Finally a Turkish army came back to Adrianople. Surrounded by enemies, her armies beaten, her resources exhausted, Bulgaria gave up the fight.

THE TREATY OF BUCHAREST.

The results of the Second Balkan War were embodied in the Treaty of Bucharest. Serbia received all of Macedonia west of the Rhodopians, Greece not only Salonica, but Kavala, Seres and Drama. Rumania took the whole Silistria region between the Danube and the Black Sea, with some of the richest of Bulgarian lands. Turkey took back all but a tiny fraction of Thrace. After her great efforts Bulgaria acquired nothing but a little strip of territory fronting the Aegean, but inaccessible by reason of mountains. Of what she had hoped to gain she had lost all but a few hun-

dred thousands of people. Serbia and Greece had each acquired above 15,000 square miles of territory and 2,000,000 people; Bulgaria had gained less than half a million. Not less than a million Bulgars had been lost to Greece and Serbia and the whole dream of Bulgarian statesmen and people for a generation had been destroyed.

From the Second Balkan War, then, Bulgaria retired sullen, resentful, revengeful. All seemed lost, but there was no surrender of Bulgarian purpose. Meantime Russia had scored another great victory and Austrian diplomacy was bankrupt. A new strong Serbia was looking across the Danube into Bosnia and Croatia; Pan-Serbian dreams had assumed as perilous proportions as those of the Italian patriots half a century before. Serbia already felt herself a second Sardinia and backed by Russia dreamed of "redeeming" the millions of southern Slavs from Trieste to the Drav and from Laibach to Belgrade.

It was the realization of the meaning of the Serbian dream which precipitated the Great War. Austrian diplomacy, twice defeated by Russian, having twice seen Russian influence increased by Balkan wars, recognizing the Serbian menace, took advantage of the murder of the Archduke to strike at Serbia and give Russia the choice between abandoning her little Slav protégé and risking Armageddon. Russia's answer was the first step in the colossal drama now going forward.

WHEN THE GREAT WAR BEGAN.

The outbreak of the Great War last August found the Balkans in this situation: Serbia was already engaged; Greece and Rumania were bound to Serbia by treaty to preserve the Treaty of Bucharest, but both were ruled by friends of Germany. Charles of Rumania was a Hohenzollern. Constantine's wife was the sister of the Kaiser. The courts of both states were strongly pro-German. The people, on the contrary, were strongly inclined to the Allies.

But Greece was unable to go to the aid of Serbia, because there was a steady prospect that Serbian defeat would lead Bulgaria to seek to reclaim not alone the portion of Macedonia held by Serbia, but that occupied by Greece, including both Kavala and Salonica. Greece was then immobilized by Bulgarian menace and by the court sympathies with Germany. Rumania,

quite in the same fashion, was held by the fear that if she attacked Austria and were defeated Bulgaria would take her revenge.

But the Rumanian situation was still more complex. In Austria the province of Bukovina, just across the Rumanian frontier, is populated by Slavs and Rumanians. In Hungary the majority of the people of Transylvania are Rumanians and those of the Banat of Temesvar are Serb and Rumanian. Finally the mass of the people of the Russian province of Bessarabia are Rumanian and before the Russo-Turkish War much of Bessarabia had belonged to Rumania. Rumania, therefore, began to make a price for her services. She would fight with the Germans if Austria would give her Transylvania and Bukovina. She would fight with Russia if Russia would give her Bessarabia and promise her Bukovina and both Transylvania and the Banat of Temesvar after the Teutonic alliance had been defeated.

Austria promptly rejected these terms; they meant the instant rebellion of Hungary. Russia was not less prompt. Bessarabia she would not give, nor the Slav half of Bukovina. For Serbia she claimed the Panscova portion of Temesvar, lying opposite Belgrade and peopled by Serbs. Here was a deadlock. Meantime Bulgaria insisted that she would not refrain from attacking Rumania unless Rumania gave over her stealings of the Peace of Bucharest, including Silistria.

Meantime, the Italian problem raised new difficulties. Italy claimed Dalmatia and Istria, but the mass of the people of these Austrian provinces, apart from a few coast towns, are Slavs, Croats, Serbs and Slovenes. Serbia was willing to give back Macedonia to Bulgaria if she were assured her race brothers along the Adriatic and in addition Northern Albania, of which Austria had deprived her. But Italy insisted that she should have Dalmatia as far south as the Narenta River, and demanded that the Kingdom of Albania should be maintained intact. This left Serbia with a much reduced future and with no readiness to surrender Macedonia to Bulgaria.

VENIZELLOS TRIES AND FAILS.

Despairing of any help from Rumania or Bulgaria the Allies turned to Greece. Ready now to launch their attack by fleet upon the Dardanelles they wanted the Greek army to make the landward attack.

Venizelos, the great Greek statesman, promptly lent a friendly ear to the proposals. Before Greece could move she must propitiate Bulgaria. This could be done by retroceding Kavala, Drama and Seres. In return the Allies offered Smyrna and the Asiatic littoral from Rhodes to Mitylene. This offer Venizelos accepted.

But King Constantine spoiled the plan. Hellenic hatred of Bulgaria was very intense; the proposal to cede to Bulgaria the purely Greek city of Kavala, the prize of the Second Balkan War, roused instant Greek protest. Venizelos insisted the King at first agreed, then backed out. The King denied this publicly. Meantime the Allied fleet had tried to force the Straits and failed. This spoiled all chance of Greek support. Venizelos resigned. Greece became the creature of German diplomacy represented by the Gounaris Ministry, and until the recent election returned Venizelos to power. Greek neutrality was assured.

With the return of Venizelos a new situation has developed. But can the great Cretan, complete as is his hold upon his countrymen, persuade them to give over Kavala to the Bulgars? This may be doubted. Yet unless he can do this Greece's entrance into the war may bring Bulgaria in on the other side, and this would be a disaster, not a victory for the Allies. Meantime the entrance of Italy has reduced the resources of the Allies for purchasing Greece. Greece and Italy are rivals in the Aegean and along the Adriatic. Presumably, Italy would strongly oppose the cession to Greece of territory in Asia Minor or in Southern Albania.

BULGARIA FIXES A PRICE.

The failure of Venizelos having removed Greece from the field for the moment Bulgaria promptly occupied the auction block. She was prepared to send her army against the Turks, and this would mean the prompt ending of the Dardanelles deadlock, if the Allies would persuade Serbia to surrender Macedonia. Bulgaria title to this was clear, if the desire of the inhabitants and questions of language and race were to be considered. If in addition she could be assured that Rumania would give back Silistria and that her claims to Kavala be weighed in the grand rearrangement following the war, Bulgaria was ready to take up the old road to the Chatalja.

But now Serbia balked. She had made

Servia, Bulgaria, Rumania and Greece Can
Turn the Key to
Armageddon.

a wonderful fight, twice routed Austrian armies, suffered from nattie and from typhus fever. To please Italy she had given over her claim to Dalmatia north of the Narenta. To please Rumania she had been prepared to make sacrifices in Temesvar. To satisfy Italy further, she had agreed to abide by the decision of the powers as to Northern Albania. By what right could they now ask her to surrender Macedonia, conquered in 1912, now the sole avenue open to her to draw supplies from the outside world?

To this the Allies replied by appeals and warnings, while the cannon of Germany gave new warnings on the Danube frontier. When these lines are written the Serbian Parliament is meeting to consider the question as to whether it will make the all important sacrifice to Bulgaria.

But Bulgaria, like Rumania, was also negotiating with the other side. From the Turk she demanded Adrianople and the part of Thrace assured her by the agreement of London—that is, the region north of the Enos-Midia line—as the price of her neutrality. The Turk has replied by vague offers of railway concessions west of Adrianople, mere trackage rights, to let Bulgaria reach her port of Dedeagatch. This, too, is unsatisfactory. Finally Germany is endeavoring by loans to keep Bulgaria neutral and finds a powerful ally in the Czar Ferdinand, who was born a petty Austrian prince.

POINTS OF DIFFICULTY.

Summarizing briefly, it will be seen that the following difficulties face the Allied statesmen, who are trying to restore the old Balkan Alliance and enlist the Balkan States against the Turk and the Teuton. Rumania, having once been betrayed by Russia, hesitates to accept Russian promises and presses claims to Slav-inhabited regions in Bukovina and Temesvar; in the latter province she claims the very hills that face the Serbian capital.

Serbian concessions to Bulgaria are halted by the claims of Italy on Serb-inhabited lands in Dalmatia and by the determination of Rome to preserve Albania intact and thus make it an Italian protectorate after the war.

Greece is reluctant to cede lands inhabited by Greeks to Bulgaria. She is angered by Italian pretensions to Southern Albania, which is inhabited by an Albanian population closely affiliated with the Greeks in religion, by the Italian occupation of Rhodes and the Dodecanesus, which are by history and by the tongue and tradition of their people Hellenic. She is doubtful of the Allied power to give Smyrna as a compensation for Kavala.

Bulgaria makes her entrance into the war conditional on the cessions of Greek, Serbian and Rumanian territory, which the Allies cannot compel, and have so far been unable to persuade the present owners to make.

Finally, Germany profits very greatly by the fact that the rulers of Rumania, Greece and Bulgaria are either Austro-German by derivation or related to the German monarch by marriage.

COMMON PERIL AND COMMON PROFIT.

On the other hand the real point of advantage of the Allies is discoverable in the fact that Austrian success constitutes a common danger for all the Balkan States. Only if Austria is defeated can Rumania hope to obtain Bukovina, Transylvania and Temesvar. If Austria destroys Serbia Bulgaria will be placed between a new Austrian province descending to the Aegean at Salonica and the Austro-German ally, Turkey. Macedonia will be permanently lost and with it all hope of regaining Adrianople.

Greece must face the peril of an Austrian seizure of Salonica. She must also consider the permanent hostility of a defeated Italy and the peril of a continuing supremacy in the Mediterranean of the sea powers. She will also be confronted by the still enduring hatred of Bulgaria, who will not be restrained from attacking her if the chance comes. All hope of reviving the glories of ancient Hellas and later Byzantium in Asia Minor will also be lost, and with this loss may also be joined the ultimate reconquest by the Turk of Mitylene, Chios and Samos.

Such, then, is the present state of unstable equilibrium in the Near East. It can be indefinitely prolonged if the German threat to hack a way to the Golden Horn for ammunition is abandoned, but unless the long standing rivalries of race and the influence of the Balkan Germanophiles in the courts of Sofia, Athens and Bucharest prevail against the self-interests of the states, it is difficult to see how the Allies can ultimately lose their fight.

Moreover, it is necessary to recognize that any real success of the forces now besieging Gallipoli, which should bring about the fall of Constantinople, would leave the Balkan States at the mercy of the Quadruple Alliance for all time without any claim upon their sympathy or generosity.